

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

For Release Friday, December 5, 1969

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WALTER J. HICKEL

ON SIGNING OF ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

The legislation approved today by President Nixon is one of the most significant measures ever enacted by this -- or any -- country to help preserve its own and the world's wildlife.

We believe the legislation will have its greatest impact in protecting species threatened because of their commercial value but it will also be of vital aid in preserving habitat for many domestically endangered species which may have little commercial importance.

By regulating the international market for endangered species, this legislation will declare war on poachers.

We know that there are 275 species of mammals and 300 birds which are rare and endangered throughout the world. Eighty-nine species are included on the Department of the Interior endangered list for the United States alone. Some of these are endangered because they are in demand for novelty uses or because their skins provide sought-after wearing apparel. This new law will give us authority to bar imports into this country of those species which are threatened with world-wide extinction.

I have instructed our agencies in the Interior Department to develop a list of endangered species promptly so that enforcement of the law will begin promptly.

EDITORS NOTE: The legislation, signed December 5 by President Nixon, bars the import, except for certain educational and scientific purposes, of those species listed by the Secretary of the Interior as threatened with extinction.

The Secretary of the Interior is also directed to attempt to convene, through the Secretary of State, an international ministerial meeting to sign a binding convention on endangered species conservation before June 30, 1971.

Domestically, the legislation makes it a federal offense to sell or purchase any reptile, amphibian, mollusk or crustacean taken contrary to State or foreign laws. These activities already are unlawful for fish, mammals and birds.

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